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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [CB](#)
SUBJECT: CAMBODIA ELECTION: PEACEFUL, ORDERLY

REF: PHNOM PENH 602

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¶1. (SBU) The national election to choose Cambodia's next National Assembly came to a peaceful close July 27 as most of its 15,255 polling stations wrapped up ballot counting in the evening. Overall, the atmosphere was non-violent and free of threats, with many Cambodians boasting participation in their fifth major election since 1993. Embassy's 47 poll-watching teams in 18 provinces reported no major incidents directly related to the voting process, although some technical errors from the 2007 commune elections persisted. Embassy officers and local staff canvassed national poll observers NICFEC and COMFREL and representatives of all 11 contesting parties at the end of the day, who similarly reported no major incidents based on early reports from the field. Turnout appeared to be slightly higher than in the Commune Council elections -- in the 65 - 75 percent range.

¶2. (SBU) Two Sam Rainsy candidates from Kandal province were detained the night of July 26, but released early in the morning of polling day in a matter of hours and without incident. SRP party headquarters sources could not clarify the nature of the precipitating incidents. Khim Laky, the number two Sam Rainsy Party candidate standing in Kandal province, was invited by Military Police to visit a local Commune Election Committee (CEC) office on the afternoon of July 27 to discuss his taking a photograph of a village chief standing inside a voting area. Khim Laky later told us he quickly resolved the problem with the CEC and went on his way. According to the Election Law, taking photographs inside the voting area is prohibited, and officials are also prohibited from remaining in proximity of the voting area after they have cast their vote. The village chief who had remained in the voting area departed. (NOTE: Most village chiefs in Cambodia are aligned with the ruling CPP party. END NOTE.)

¶3. (SBU) After making a concerted effort to accurately register more than eight million voters, the National Election Committee (NEC) continued to struggle with providing accurate information to voters about their polling stations. In areas such as Phnom Penh where the distribution of Voter Information Notices (VIN) was below-average and voter mobility was high (reftel) the problem was most acute, with at least 5-10 percent of those Phnom Penh voters who went to the polls apparently not being able to find their names at polling stations and thus failing to vote. One senior CPP official said that even workers at the CPP headquarters could not locate their polling stations. The issuance of 1018 forms to substitute for identification was also high in some areas of the country and on occasion multiple voters having the same VIN were allowed to vote or a second person with the same VIN disenfranchised from voting. It is too early to say

how extensive the problems with identification are or whether they could have any impact on the final results.

¶4. (SBU) Cambodians returned home at the end of election day with a business-as-usual attitude, showing that most have become accustomed to the voting process. Many are now patiently awaiting the unofficial results, which could be released as early as July 28. Official results determining apportionment of the 123 National Assembly seats could be issued anytime between August 9 and September 7, depending on the scope and extent of complaints filed with the NEC and finally adjudicated in the Constitutional Council.

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